

**2nd Kings 2: 19-22; “The Healing of the Water”, Message # 1 in the series –
“Elisha & the Prophets”, Bible Study conducted by Pastor Paul Rendall
on March 21st, 2018, for those gathered at his home.**

The miracles that the prophet Elisha did at this stage in his ministry were for the confirming of the truth of the prophet's message to the people of that place, the city of Jericho. In this particular miracle Elisha was approached by the men of the city and they told him that the situation of the city was pleasant, but the water was bad and the ground barren. Elisha knows, by the Spirit of God, that something can be done about this and so he asks them to bring him a new bowl and put salt in it, and then he went out to the source of the water and cast the salt into it, and then said to them – “Thus says the Lord: I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.” And truly, it was permanently healed. This little portion of Scripture has some glorious truths bound up in it that will be of benefit to us in our situation here in this city; as the situation of the water here is not all that good either. And the hearts of many are polluted with sin. Can anything be done about it. Can the water be healed? Our passage says that there are things can be done; things which are related to the word pictures given to us in this text. So I want us to think together about the meaning of all of these word pictures which are given to us here, as they relate to the preaching of the gospel and how people can be everlastingly helped by it.

1st of all – Let's think about the situation of the city and its water and ground and what that represents.

The city of Jericho is representative of the city of this world and the all the inhabitants of it. For many people, the world has the appearance of pleasantness to it. This is because the world was created by God and it was created for man's good. And when God blesses the physical or geographic situation of any city in which a person or a family lives in, they are truly blessed in an outwardly sense. Living in a place like Jericho was pleasant to the eyes and a delight to the senses in terms of its geographic setting, and yet there was still this great problem, this trouble with having bad water. There is much bad water, much false doctrine, the doctrine of demons, that exists in the world today. If this is drunk, people cannot live; they can only die. The author of false doctrine from the beginning of the world has been Satan. Let me make a comparison. The world, when it was first created, when Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden, was a very pleasant situation. Nothing was bad, and everything was very good. This is how it was. But then Satan came into the garden and turned the clear clean waters bad.

Turn over with me to Genesis 3, verses 1-6. “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.” “And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” “And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’” “Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die.’” “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.” “She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”

Now, you see here that everything was very pleasant in the garden until Eve was deceived by what appeared to be pleasant, but really wasn't. Satan made the waters bad by his mixing the clear clean truth of God with lies. He questioned God. “Has God said?” Well God certainly had said. He said, “You shall not surely die.” But she would surely die. But when Eve saw that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was “pleasant to the eyes” and “desirable to make one wise”, she didn't realize at all how her eating of the fruit would affect her. She was

deceived into eating it, and she would die spiritually because of it. And so, she partook of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and she gave some also to her husband and he ate, and then sin and death entered the world. Sin entered their souls, and sin affected their entire being, polluting it, and entire creation, marring it. The clean clear waters of their hearts was muddied up. Sin entered into every aspect of their being. Now they were awakened up to a sense of their sin, and the pollution and barrenness of their hearts, and they would need to seek to find the remedy for the bad water of the lies that they had believed, and the barren ground that their hearts had become. And the only answer would come through their partaking of the water of the word and promise of God.

This was compounded by the fact the they were now under a curse. Look at Genesis 3: 17-19. “Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.” “Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.” “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.” This is a curse which was placed not only upon Adam, but because he stood as the federal head of all mankind, the effects of this curse would be upon all men descended from him. They were driven out of the garden, and they still found a place to live, but even though it may have been pleasant in certain ways, it was not like the original creation in its beauty and glory. Now the water and ground of their hearts were polluted with sin. They needed a Savior, and God promised them that they would find one in the Seed of the Woman, our Lord Jesus Christ. Now this curse upon the ground of earth is further compounded by the curse that came upon Jericho after it was destroyed by the children of Israel. This is related to what is being portrayed for us in our text with regard to the men of the city of Jericho coming to Elisha and explaining their situation to him. The men of the city of Jericho realized that the situation of the city was pleasant, but they also realized that the water was bad and the ground was barren. This was no doubt due to the fact that their particular city was under this curse on their water and ground due to the disobedience of Adam and compounded by this one man and his sons who would rebuild the city of Jericho.

Turn back with over to Joshua 6, verse 26. These words were spoken by Joshua after he and the people of Israel had seen the walls come down, and after they had utterly destroyed the inhabitants of that city. “Then Joshua charged them at that time, saying, ‘Cursed be the man before the Lord who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates.’” Now turn over to 1st Kings 16: 32-34 – “And Ahab made a wooden image.” “Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Isreal who were before him.” “In his days Hiel of Bethel build Jericho.” “He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the Lord, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun.” So, it is no wonder that at this point in Israel’s history that the waters of Jericho were bad. They were probably still under this curse which Joshua pronounced upon it, and which God confirmed by the death of the firstborn of Hiel, and his youngest son as well.

Now 2nd – I want us to think about what the men of the city, and Elisha, and the new bowl, and the salt represent.

I want you to notice that the men of that city in Elisha’s day came to him and they explained to him about the water being bad and the ground being barren on account of the water being bad. They explain this awful situation to Elisha and he proceeds to tell them what they should do and what he will do. They were to bring him a new bowl, and put salt in it. This they did, and then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, “Thus says the Lord: ‘I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.’” This, I am trying to show you, is representative of the preacher of the gospel setting forth the spiritual realities related to salvation in a way that will bring cleansing to the minds and hearts of his

hearers. The errors and misconceptions and lies of the bad water must be neutralized, so that the water could be healed, so that it then could be drunk by all the people in the city without their being harmed by it.

This why Elisha told the men of the city to bring him a new bowl, and put salt in it. The people of Jericho needed pure water to drink. And the preacher in our day knows that people of the world and people in Christ's Church need the pure word of God, and the Spirit's working in their heart to confirm that world. The word "bowl" in our text can be translated "jar" or "plate", but the word "bowl" will do quite well. Elisha needed something to put salt in, to then scatter it upon the water. Representatively, this is a picture of every godly preacher's desire to preach the word with clarity and grace, by the power of the Holy Spirit. He would gather the salt together in the bowl and he would then scatter it on the water. Representing the New Testament preachers preparations for his message, he would gather the truths of the gospel and the grace of God together in a concentrated form. The bowl represents the body of the truth to be preached. And within this bowl are the specific teachings of grace which must be preached by one who knows what grace is; knows it in his soul and would make it known to others. Like Jesus' parable of the New Wine in a New Wineskin, and then he would cast this salt from the bowl onto the waters; upon all the bad waters of false doctrine put forth by lying spirits, and thus the water which the men of the city would drink, would be changed. Paul says to the church at Colosse, chapter 4, verse 6 – "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one."

Those who wanted pure water to hear a pure gospel, helped Elisha by bringing him these things. In our days, those who want to hear the unadulterated word of God will help the preacher by helping to reform the church that they are members of. The only way that false doctrine and false worship can be destroyed is when people see their need for it to go. These people saw their need for the bad water to go. The men of that city didn't know how Elisha would use the bowl and the salt, but they brought them to him. Even so, people who want to know the truth must listen to the instructions of the preacher. He will call for a "bowl", that is, form of reverent worship which will best glorify God. And he will call for the members to support his preaching of the gospel of grace and the doctrines of grace (the gospel of the covenant of salt, 2nd Chronicles 13: 5) to be preached. In this way the water will be healed, and the pure word of God will come to people. I hope that you can see that these men of the city who came to Elisha are representative of those inquiring sinners who come to listen to a preacher because they are under conviction of sin. They are persons who have been awakened by the Holy Spirit to see the need of their hearts being cleansed by grace. God does His work in such an unusual way; that if the waters of life have become bitter and distasteful to them, and if the Spirit is striving with them, they will come looking for a preacher, someone who can tell them how the waters of their heart and life can be made fresh and pure and clean and tasteful again.

You can see a great illustration of this truth if you will turn with me over to Exodus chapter 15, verses 22-27. "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur." "And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water." "Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter." Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?' "So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree." "When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet." "There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, and said, 'If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians.'" "For I am the LORD who heals you." "Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters."

You can see that in this passage the water at Marah was bitter and the people could not drink it. But after Moses cried out to the Lord, the Lord showed him a tree, which, when he cast it into the waters, they were made sweet. This is how needy sinners everywhere come to drink of pure water and how their drinking of the pure word of God actually becomes sweet to them. It is when they see the efficacy of Christ's cross; the tree in the water. In 1st Peter 2: 24 it says that – "He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree that we having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed." When that tree is thrown into the waters of the word which is preached to us; when we realize the greatness of the grace of Christ, we will most certainly only want to drink pure water from this well alone.

And 3rd – Let's think together about what kind of water these men needed.

Verse 21 – "Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, 'Thus says the Lord: 'I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.' "So the water remains healed to this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spoke." So, I have now shown you what the situation was with this city; that Jericho was representative of the city of the world of mankind who are under a curse due to the sin of Adam before them. They have this great problem which is related to sin and listening to false doctrine. I have shown you that clean clear water is what people must have to live physically, and spiritually speaking people must have the water of life; they must receive and partake of the waters of life. They cannot partake of waters that are bad; of false doctrine and the spirit of teaching of worldly and sinful men; men led on by the Devil. The gospel, and the water which the Spirit gives are the water of life to thirsty sinners everywhere. And, if they will drink it, they will find life and that more abundantly. They can be saved, refreshed, cleansed, and satisfied as Christians. They will then only thirst for righteousness. And if they are discerning, they will only drink from these pure waters of the word; that is, the teaching that has been healed. By listening to this teaching and heeding this teaching of the Bible, there will be no more death for them.

The way that they come to these waters and drink, is by listening to the preaching of grace, and then they take freely of the water of life. Turn with me over to Revelation 22: 16 and 17 – "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things the churches." "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." "And the Spirit and the bride say Come!" "And let him who hears say, 'Come!'" "And let him who thirsts come." "And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." Look also over at John chapter 4, verses 13 and 14 – "Jesus answered and said to her, (the woman at the well) 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.'" "But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." So sinners everywhere need to drink of the waters which Christ shall give them; that is the blessed truth of what He came to do for them, and to drink deeply of the grace of Christ which is poured out to them in relation to the preaching of the truth.

These waters which only Christ can give are the waters which are proclaimed by preachers in all generations. Isaiah 55: 1-3 – "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price." "Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy?" "Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance." "Incline your ear, and come to Me." "Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you – the sure mercies of David."